

Writing Intensive: The Path to Publication

Erin Clyburn, Instructor

Monday, June 26 – Friday, June 30, 2023

Hollins University, Roanoke, VA

You've spent months (or, very likely, years!) writing and editing your novel, workshopping and rereading and editing again, and you are ready to seek out traditional publication. What's next? This intensive, run by literary agent Erin Clyburn, will cover all the steps you need to take your work from manuscript to book: crafting a query letter, learning what comp titles are (and how to find yours), researching which agents to query, writing a synopsis, making sure your first page shines, learning about the market, seeing what your agent relationship might look like, and working on your platform (and knowing if you need one at all).

This intensive is a 20-hour advanced tutorial intended for authors of novel-length works (chapter books, middle grade, and young adult) who have completed or near-completed manuscripts and are preparing to seek traditional publication. The goal of the intensive is for you to finish the week with a polished query package and an understanding of how to seek out and approach the right agent for your work. The workshop has a minimum of six participants and a maximum of 10, on a first-registered, first-served basis.

The intensive will meet in eight sessions over five days.

Monday, June 26, 1-4 p.m.: Getting to Know Your Book: You have finished your manuscript, so the next step is zooming out to understand where your book fits into the market. The instructor will give an overview of what's happening in today's market and break down the houses that make up the traditional publishing world. Participants will learn how to know the right audience and genre for their manuscripts.

Tuesday, 9 a.m. to noon, 1-3 p.m.: The Query Letter: A query is the pitch letter that is an agent's first introduction to your work. The instructor will share examples of successful query letters and walk the participants through how to write their own. Participants will then write and workshop their own query letters for their projects.

Wednesday, 9 a.m. to noon, 1-3 p.m.: The All-Important First Page: When it comes to querying agents, the first page of your manuscript (specifically, the first paragraph) is the most important. The instructor will share examples of successful first pages, and participants will share and workshop the first pages of their manuscripts. Today, we'll also outline how to craft a plot synopsis, another integral piece of the query package. How do you distill your whole plot into a succinct page? The instructor will walk participants through the crafting of a successful synopsis.

Thursday, 9 a.m. to noon, 1-3 p.m.: The Right Agent for You: The instructor will outline how to find agents to query, how to know which agents are legitimate, which would be a good fit for your work, and how to go about querying them. We'll also look at what an agent does, what the author-agent partnership entails, and what to expect after you have representation.

Friday, 9-11 a.m.: The instructor will share resources on going forward, covering topics like beta readers and writing groups, author platform, conference participation, social media participation, what news to follow to keep their fingers on the pulse of the industry, and more.

Erin Clyburn, *Instructor*

Erin Clyburn is a literary agent with Howland Literary. Prior to joining Howland Literary, she was an associate agent with The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency. She was the general manager and director of collection development for Turtleback Books, a distributor of books to the school and library market, and she has over a decade of experience in magazine publishing, having worked for brands including Food & Wine, Cooking Light, People, and Entertainment Weekly. She received her BA in English Literature from Mississippi State University and her MA in Children's Literature from Hollins University. She lives in Birmingham, Alabama, with her partner, Michael, and three unruly rabbits.



Erin represents middle grade fiction, YA fiction, and adult fiction and nonfiction. In MG and YA, she is looking for horror, mystery, thriller, big-hearted contemporary, and grounded stories with magical or speculative elements. In adult fiction, she is most interested in upmarket and literary fiction, and she gravitates toward the dark and strange: horror, thriller, mystery, and grounded stories with speculative or magical elements. In a nutshell: She loves weird books. In nonfiction, she's interested in intersectional perspectives and is looking for narrative nonfiction and deep dives into topics including pop science, nature, food and culinary history, and sports and adventure. An Alabamian with Louisiana roots, Erin is particularly interested in Southern literary and upmarket fiction from diverse voices in the above genres.

Find Erin online at howlandliterary.com and on Twitter [@erin_clyburn](https://twitter.com/erin_clyburn).